

10. Freight

The movement of freight is an important part of Boston's local and regional economy. Recently the City of Boston established the Back Streets program to protect and enhance industrial districts that provide jobs to local residents and services essential to our economy. Boston's intermodal freight centers are located in these districts at its port and along rail lines.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and BTB are working to develop policies and projects that improve transportation access to Back Streets areas. The focus is on:

- Evaluating **trends in freight shipment** within Boston and the region with respect to commodities shipped and transportation facilities and modes used.
- Enhancing regional **highway access** for freight centers served by the port and rail.
- Developing a system of **bypass truck routes** that significantly reduce truck traffic on residential streets.

City partnerships with the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport), that operates the majority of freight facilities in Boston, are key to the management of freight transportation.

Back Streets

Back Streets, which are illustrated in Figure 26, include Boston's manufacturing, wholesale, construction, commercial services and food processing businesses. They are located in primarily industrial and commercially zoned districts. Back Streets employ over 100,000 people in Boston, provide revenue to the City, encourage and enable entrepreneurship, foster competition and hence maintain costs of goods and services and minimize inflation. Back Streets, by forming the city's economic backbone and providing needed products and services, are integral to the life flow of Boston.

Transportation is interwoven into the fabric of Back Streets. The successes of **Back Streets rely on access for both goods and employees**. Rails, ships, airports, and the roadway and highway systems enable the flow of goods and services. Public transportation provides links residential areas and jobs in Back Streets districts. Back Streets businesses need to use transportation infrastructure effectively, without impacting the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods. This requires partnership between all stakeholders including, businesses, adjacent communities, and government agencies.

ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE ACCESS

BTB has a limited responsibility in the public control of freight in Boston. Operational responsibilities lie with state and federal agencies. BTB's role is to manage freight movements over local streets in a manner that protects residential neighborhoods and preserves access to businesses.

- BTB requires that all business-related parking, including loading activity, be on-site.
- BTB designates loading zones on city streets for use by commercial vehicles typically for up to one hour.
- Parking by commercial vehicles that have a capacity of more than one ton is prohibited on all city streets between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m. and on Sundays except when actually loading or unloading.
- Commercial vehicles that back into a curb on city streets must provide an unobstructed roadway of at least 20 feet on two-way streets (10 feet on one-way streets).
- Trailers / semis that are parking on city streets must be attached to a motor vehicle capable of towing it.
- Heavy commercial vehicles the transportation of hazardous materials is prohibited on certain streets and tunnels in the region.



Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)

Figure 27:
Industrial Locations in Boston

Intermodal freight centers are located in Back Streets districts. They connect goods shipped by rail, regional highway, air and water transportation to over-the-road trucks. These centers include three port terminals (Conley Terminal, the Boston Autoport and Chelsea Creek), Beacon Park rail yard in Allston and Logan Airport. In addition, the U.S. General Mail Facility (GMF) generates significant truck traffic. Because Boston has no active rail-to-port connections, all shipments that arrive by ship must be transferred by truck from the shipyards to travel to their local destinations or to the rail yard in either Allston or Ayer.

South Boston

South Boston has excellent access to the regional highway system, rail and port facilities, and to Logan International Airport. I-90 passes through the district. The South Boston Bypass Road for commercial vehicles connects to I-93. Local truck routes serve the area and provide convenient access to port facilities along the Reserved Channel. The Boston Marine Industrial Park, which is located in the district, has its own rail connection and is within one-half mile of the I-90 interchange. Public transportation is currently limited to local and Crosstown bus routes. The Silver Line, which will connect to South Station, is under construction and will include an airport connection.

Conley Terminal is located in South Boston. This facility is the location of all container shipping in Boston. Existing truck bans on local streets, the opening of the Ted Williams Tunnel, the I-90 extension and the South Boston Bypass Road are significantly reducing Conley Terminal truck traffic through residential South Boston. Designated truck routes include East and West First Street, Summer Street, and D Street north of First Street. Recommendations outlined in BTB's *South Boston Transportation Study*, when complete, will reduce the amount of regional traffic on local streets in South Boston.

The **U.S. General Mail Facility (GMF)** is located on Dorchester Avenue next to South Station across the Fort Point Channel from South Boston. Mail arrives via truck from other regional mail processing facilities and is distributed to local Post Offices. In turn, these Post Offices ship mail to the GMF for distribution throughout the country. The GMF is one of the busiest mail processing facilities in the country. Truck layover is located in the Fort Point District adjacent to **Gillette's** facilities.



Today, a broad category of authorized vehicles can use the South Boston Bypass Road. In the future, access will be restricted to trucks and a limited number of commercial vehicle categories.



BTB's *South Boston Transportation Study* identified options to reduce Conley Terminal traffic on local streets in South Boston. (Photo: Massport)

NEWMARKET BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Newmarket business district is one of Boston's busiest trucking and distribution areas and a vital part of Boston's economy. It is a thriving business district providing approximately 15,000 jobs and many of the food and industrial services needed for Boston to function.

The City of Boston is committed to protecting and expanding this unique resource. As part of Back Streets, the City has dedicated over \$125,000 to complete an Implementation Plan that will respond in a comprehensive manner to the infrastructure and traffic, zoning and land use issues facing the Newmarket district.

Working with the Newmarket Business Association (NBA) and other area stakeholders, the City of Boston will use this effort to identify consensus transportation goals for the area and implement short-term measures. The goals include:

- Identify infrastructure improvements to enhance access to the Newmarket area.
- Recommend operational changes to the internal Newmarket roadway network.
- Provide better public transportation service for Newmarket in collaboration with the MBTA.
- Establish a parking plan to meet employee and customer needs



Auto shipments through the Port of Boston have been consolidated at the Boston Autoport in Charlestown. (Photo: Massport)

Newmarket/Crosstown

The Newmarket area has access to the regional highway system at the Massachusetts Avenue and Southampton Street interchanges, which connect to Logan International Airport and the port. I-93 passes through the district and the South Boston Bypass Road, a commercial vehicle roadway, provides another connection to port facilities in South Boston. CSX rail lines extend to businesses in the eastern portion of the district. Available and planned transit services include the Red Line at Andrew Square, local and Crosstown bus routes, and future Silver Line and Urban Ring transit.

Charlestown

Back Streets businesses have excellent access to the regional highway system and Logan Airport with conveniently located interchanges at Sullivan and City Squares. Local truck routes and rail connections provide access to port facilities at Moran Terminal. Available transit includes Orange Line stations at Sullivan Square and Community College and local bus service. The Urban Ring connection to Sullivan Square will provide future access to Somerville and Cambridge.

The **Boston Autoport** at Moran Terminal is the site of a significant portion of all automobiles destined for New England dealers. This results in a large number of car carriers traveling between the Autoport and I-93 or the Tobin Bridge. Locally, truck traffic currently uses Medford or Chelsea Streets to make this connection. The City has recognized the need to maintain and upgrade freight service to the Autoport and to the industrial/warehouses and Massport facilities along the Mystic River north of Medford Street. Proposed developments in the Navy Yard will generate additional traffic on Medford Street. In response the City has studied the feasibility of constructing a bypass road from the Autoport as an alternative to Medford Street. Based on the results of this study BTB and the BRA have encouraged EOTC to acquire the required right-of-way. The proposed **Medford Street Bypass Road** will:

- Provide better access to the Autoport.
- Help Medford Street retain its residential character.
- Provide a two-way bypass road from the terminal to the intersection with Main Street at the Schrafft building.
- Retain the existing railroad track that services the Moran terminal and the abutting properties.
- Improve freight access to help to develop the underutilized facilities north of Medford Street.

East Boston

East Boston is well connected to the highway system, port facilities along Chelsea Creek, and Logan International Airport. Route 1A passes through the district and provides connections to I-90. Truck movement will be kept away from residential streets with a planned bypass road. Available and planned transit services, including Blue Line stations and Urban Ring connections, link businesses in the district to many city neighborhoods.

The area of East Boston along **Chelsea Creek** is home to several fuel depots. These aging depots are difficult for tankers to reach because of the depth of Chelsea Creek and the necessity of navigating past the Chelsea Creek bridge. Fuel trucks from the Chelsea Creek depots have two routes to access the regional highway network. One takes them directly to Route 1A to access the north eastern areas of the state and the other routes the trucks through Chelsea proper to utilize the Tobin Bridge.

As the largest airport in New England, **Logan International Airport** generates a significant amount of air cargo activity. All air cargo must enter and leave Logan Airport by truck. This activity generally consists of small parcels and other good usually shipped by USPS, UPS, FedEx and other air freight shippers. Logan has two main air cargo facilities – the North Cargo Area located next to Route 1A and the Bird Island Flats/South Cargo Area located next to Terminal B. The opening of the Ted Williams Tunnel has dramatically improved the southern connections to the regional highway system for all air cargo truck traffic. The opening of the I-90 extension will further enhance this connection. Connections to the north will be improved with the proposed East Boston Bypass Road (see box)

Allston/Brighton

Allston/Brighton has excellent access to the regional highway system. The I-90 interchange at Allston landing provides convenient access for Back Streets businesses in the district. Transit service includes local bus service and potential future Urban Ring connections.

EAST BOSTON BYPASS ROAD

Utilizing a dormant railroad right-of-way, the East Boston Bypass Road would connect Logan Airport to the growing industrial area in neighboring Chelsea's airport overlay zoning district. By building this grade separated connection, the trucks on congested streets through Day Square would bypass the neighborhood increasing safety and reducing pollution.

Projected to cost \$10 million, the bypass road would provide East Boston's already overburdened transportation system with much needed relief. BTB has advocated for the bypass road, as it would:

- Provide direct truck connection from the airport to the Chelsea industrial area.
- Reduce truck traffic on East Boston streets and route 1A.
- Provide a connection for the bus rapid transit (BRT) system proposed as Phase 2 of the Urban Ring.

The railroad right-of-way is in the process of being legally abandoned by its owner, CSX, and preserved for future transportation use. As a result of lobbying by BTB and others, the bypass road is being included in State planning and funding efforts, and has achieved the following status:

- Listed on the state's transportation bond bill for \$10 million.
- Incorporated into the Boston MPO's fiscally constrained 25-year Regional Transportation Plan.



The City of Boston, as part of the ongoing North Allston Study is making recommendations to preserve and enhance economic activity at Beacon Park in Allston.

Beacon Park, located in north Allston, is the northeast terminus of the nation's rail freight network. CSX owns and operates the rail yard and truck distribution facilities that serve Boston and regional businesses. Because there are no rail-to-dock facilities in Boston, goods arriving by ship for transfer to rail are relayed by truck via the Massachusetts Turnpike to Beacon Park. Cambridge Street links the Turnpike and the regional highway network with Beacon Park.

Jamaica Plain

The Jamaica Plain district is located along the Washington Street corridor parallel to rail right-of-way and the Southwest Corridor Park. Once home to a number of breweries, warehouse buildings in the area are being converted to residential (including artist-lofts) and commercial uses. Local arterial streets such as Washington Street, Columbus Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard provide connections to the regional highway system at the I-93 / Massachusetts Avenue interchange. For workers, transit access and proximity to residential neighborhoods are a strength of the district. These include six Orange Line stations, two commuter rail stations, and the Silver Line service that is under construction.

Hyde Park

Industrial businesses developed in Hyde Park around rail lines that run through the district. The 63 Sprague Street and Westinghouse sites are located along existing freight rail lines. Neponset Valley Parkway and Route 138 (Blue Hill Avenue) proved connections to Route 128, to the south. Available and planned transit services link businesses in the district to city neighborhoods and include bus and commuter rail service at Readville, Fairmont and Hyde Park stations.

Neponset

The Neponset district was once dominated by light manufacturing and auto shop uses. It has access to the regional highway system with interchanges to I-93 at Freeport Street and Neponset Circle, which also provides connections to Logan International Airport and the port. I-93 passes through the district and is accessed by local arterial roadways. Alsen-Mapes is within one mile of I-93 interchanges. Public transportation includes local bus service and the Red Line station at Fields Corner.

Action Plan:

Freight

Encourage Back Streets Businesses to Adopt Good Neighbor Policies

Good neighbor policies encourage Back Streets businesses and adjacent neighborhoods to work together to create livable communities. Back Streets businesses contribute to this goal by observing guidelines and regulations that create an environment that is respectful of the residential communities located next to them and that maintain an efficient and safe flow of traffic.

- Back Streets businesses should meet regularly with local neighborhood groups to protect the quality of life in the district and for employees to participate in community activities.
- Pedestrian safety in the Backs Streets district should be enhanced.
- Trucks should use the region's highways and other limited-access roads, avoiding neighborhood streets.
- Back Streets businesses and adjacent houses and facilities like public playgrounds should be oriented to avoid conflicts between truck access, loading activity and community life.
- All business related parking should be on-site.
- The law prohibiting idling of engines for more than five minutes should be strictly enforced.
- Employees should use public transportation for the ride to and from work.

Promote Back Street Program

BTD will continue to work with the BRA, area businesses and interested parties to provide technical support to the Back Streets program. This includes efforts to provide appropriate truck connections to these areas. Employee access to Back Streets businesses is as important as truck access to move goods into and out of these areas. BTD will continue to promote transit options for employees working in Back Streets areas. BTD and BRA studies and planning efforts in South Boston, East Boston and Charlestown have identified improvements to truck access for those Back Streets areas. The agencies will continue to work with the community to propose appropriate improvements for the Newmarket/ Crosstown and Allston/ Brighton districts.

Enhance the Economic Functions of the Beacon Park Freight Facility

The BRA and BTB will work with the Allston/Brighton community, CSX, Harvard University, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority and other effected and interested parties to evaluate existing conditions and recommend future directions for the Beacon Park freight facility. Actions include:

- Evaluate the current functions of Beacon Park with respect to other rail heads in Boston and eastern Massachusetts and in the context of the freight shipment economy. Project future levels of usage for each function.
- Determine the impact of freight operations and rail service on truck usage on the Turnpike, regional and Boston roads.
- Based on projected activity levels at the Park for each freight function, explore possible rail head and land area reconfigurations for the site.

Improve the South Boston Truck Route

BTB will continue its work with MassHighway, Massport, and South Boston residents and businesses to further the *South Boston Transportation Study* recommendations to improve the South Boston truck route including:

- Extending E Street to meet Pump House Road (future) and the Massport Haul Road.
- Extending the Massport Haul Road to the Boston Marine Industrial Park.
- Incorporating connections to the South Boston Bypass Road at Cypher Street in a manner that address residential concerns.
- Improve access for the Gillette and United States Postal Service facilities in the Fort Point District.

Implement the Truck Bypass Road in East Boston

BTB will continue to work with MassHighway, Massport, the MBTA, and East Boston residents and businesses to implement a connection that bypasses Route 1A and local streets. This planning is proceeding in close coordination with planning for the Urban Ring transit project which is also considering a similar connection. Next steps include:

- Identify funds and a long term owner to design, build and maintain the bypass road.
- Work with the MBTA on the Phase 2 planning for the Urban Ring which incorporates bus rapid transit (BRT) service on the bypass road.

Develop a Medford Street Bypass Road

BTB will continue to work with EOTC, Massport and Charlestown residents and businesses to preserve the rail right-of-way to Moran Terminal and to develop the right-of-way as a freight bypass road. Next steps include:

- Supporting EOTC efforts to acquire the required right of way when it is released by Guilford.
- Advocating for resources to implement the *Rutherford Avenue Corridor Study* recommendations to improve Sullivan Square.
- Using Autoport facilities at Moran Terminal for tour bus layover when it underutilized.